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GIVEN BY

James L. Whitney

Rules For the Society of Negroes, 1693

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By

COTTON MATHER

NEW YORK

1888

James L. Whitney,
Sept. 29, 1899.

THE original publication of the "Rules," etc., now reproduced, was a broadside sheet, which, so far as I know, has been entirely unknown to Mather Collectors and others interested in Americana for many years past. I now print a few copies in order to preserve so interesting a memorial of Cotton Mather's work—in which, it will be observed, there is no touch of antislavery sentiment, which was indeed almost unknown at that period, anywhere.

I have found in one of the author's manuscript diaries, October, 1693, preserved in the library of the Massachusetts Historical Society, the following account of this production:

"Besides ye other praying and pious meetings, which I have been continually serving, in o^r Neighborhood, a little after this Period, a company of poor Negroes, of their own Accord, addressed mee, for my Countenance to a Design wch they had, of erect-

ing such a Meeting for ye Welfare of their miserable Nation, that were Servants among us. I allowed their design and went one Evening & prayed & preached [on Ps. 68, 31], wth them: and gave them the following orders, wch I insert duly for ye curiositie of ye occasion."

GEORGE H. MOORE.

LENOX LIBRARY:
July: 1888.

RULES

For the Society of

NEGROES. 1693.

WE the Miſerable Children of *Adam*, and of *Noah*, thankfully Admiring and Accepting the Free-Grace of GOD, that Offers to Save us from our Miſeries, by the Lord Jesus Chriſt, freely Reſolve, with His Help, to become the Servants of that Glorious LORD.

And that we may be Aſſisted in the Service of our *Heavenly Maſter*, we now Join together in a SOCIETY, wherein the fallowing RULES are to be obſerved.

I. It ſhall be our Endeavour, to Meet in the *Evening* after the *Sabbath*; and *Pray* together by Turns, one to Be-

gin, and another to Conclude the Meeting; And between the two *Prayers*, a *Pſalm* shall be Sung, and a *Sermon* Repeated.

II. Our coming to the Meeting, ſhall never be without the *Leave* of ſuch as have Power over us: And we will be Careful, that our Meeting may Begin and Conclude between the Hours of *Seven* and *Nine*; and that we may not be *unſeaſonably Abſent* from the Families whereto we pertain.

III. As we will, with the Help of God, at all Times avoid all *Wicked Company*, ſo we will Receive none into our Meeting, but ſuch as have ſenſibly *Reformed* their Lives from all manner of Wickedneſs. And therefore, None ſhall be Admitted, without the Knowledge and Conſent of the *Miniſter* of God in this Place; unto whom we will alſo carry every Perſon, that ſeeks for *Admiſſion* among us; to be by Him Examined, Inſtructed and Exhorted.

IV. We will, as often as may be, Obtain ſome Wiſe and Good Man, of the *Engliſh* in the Neighbourhoud, and eſpecially the Officers of the Church, to look in upon us, and by their Preſence and Counſil, do what they think fitting for us.

V. If any of our Number, fall into the Sin of *Drunkeneſs*, or *Swearing*, or *Curſing*, or *Lying*, or *Stealing*, or notorious *Diſobedience* or *Unfaithfulneſs* unto their Maſters, we will *Admoniſh* him of his Miſcarriage, and Forbid his coming to the Meeting, for at leaſt *one Fortnight;* And except he then come with great Signs and Hopes of his *Repentance*, we will utterly Exclude him, with Blotting his *Name* out of our Liſt.

VI. If any of our Society Defile himſelf with *Fornication*, we will give him our *Admonition;* and ſo, debar him from the Meeting, at leaſt *half a Year:* Nor ſhall he Return to it, ever anv

more, without Exemplary Teſtimonies of his becoming a *New Creature.*

VII. We will, as we have Opportunity, ſet our ſelves to do all the Good we can, to the other *Negro-Servants* in the Town; And if any of them ſhould, at unfit Hours, be *Abroad*, much more, if any of them ſhould *Run away* from their Maſters, we will afford them *no Shelter:* But we will do what in us lies, that they may be diſcovered, and puniſhed. And if any *of us*, are found Faulty, in this Matter, they ſhall be no longer *of us.*

VIII. None of our Society ſhall be *Abſent* from our Meeting, without giving a *Reaſon* of the Abſence; and if it be found, that any have pretended unto their *Owners*, that they came unto the *Meeting*, when they were otherwiſe and elſewhere Employ'd, we will faithfully *Inform* their Owners, and alſo do what we can to Reclaim ſuch Perſon from all ſuch Evil Courſes for the Future.

IX. It ſhall be expected from every one in the Society, that he learn the *Catechiſm;* And therefore, it ſhall be one of our uſual Exerciſes, for one of us, to ask the *Queſtions,* and for all the reſt in their Order, to say the *Anſwers* in the *Catechiſm;* Either, The *New-Engliſh* Catechiſm, or the *Aſſemblies* Catechiſm, or the Catechiſm in the *Negro Chriſtianized.*